

Bills to repeal MPO consolidation rule enter Congress

Rrtands.com/index.php/track-maintenance/off-track-maintenance/bill-to-repeal-mpo-consolidation-rule-enters-congress.html

Monday, March 06, 2017 Written by [Mischa Wanek-Libman](#), editor



Legislation was introduced to both houses of Congress last week that would repeal a final U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) rule aimed at reforming areas where multiple Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) exist.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and cosponsors Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL), Todd Young (R-IN) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), introduced a Senate bill that Sen. Duckworth says makes sure "sure the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) can effectively plan and implement local transportation and infrastructure projects without undue interference from Washington."

Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL) introduced a companion bill into the House of Representatives.

The USDOT rule, which was issued in December 2016 by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, would require consolidation of MPOs operating within a single urbanized area. While the goal of the rule to promote more effective regional planning is admirable, MPOs affected by the rule, such as the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), says the impacts would be negative.

In a post on the new rule in December, CMAP said, "While the final rule includes new waiver provisions and a longer implementation timeline, CMAP remains concerned that the new rule would weaken the metropolitan planning process in the southeastern Wisconsin-northeastern Illinois-northwestern Indiana area. This megaregion is already well served by three high-capacity MPOs, which have established methods to coordinate with each other. Additionally, the planning context in each state is sufficiently distinct to make the sort of top-down coordination imposed by the new rule impractical."

Sen. Duckworth's office said the rule threatens to slow project delivery and impede job creation by needlessly delaying infrastructure improvements.

"We cannot afford to disrupt or delay important modernization and efficiency processes that are already facilitating innovative initiatives, such as the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. My bipartisan legislation will help cut red tape and prevent delays that hurt not only our state's economy, but our

entire nation's economy, as well," said Sen. Duckworth.

"As the current rule stands, I am concerned that it would fundamentally change the long-established cooperative working relationships between MPOs in our states and set back efforts to successfully coordinate transportation planning and investments in our region," said Sen. Durbin. "I'm proud to work with Senator Duckworth on this bill that supports Illinois MPOs and the important work they do to ensure proper coordination of the comprehensive planning development, funding and selection of transportation projects in Illinois and across the country."

"The MPO Coordination Rule is a prime example of a regulation in search of a problem," said Sen. Young. "Hoosier MPOs have a reputation of working very well with sister organizations. This is especially true in Northwest Indiana where Hoosier MPOs coordinate with sister organizations across state lines. The MPO rule will prevent the local organizations that already have a strong working relationship from efficiently representing their local communities. I look forward to working with Senator Duckworth to ensure that this misguided rule is overturned."

"Metropolitan planning organizations across the state of West Virginia have already been successful coordinating amongst themselves and with counterparts across state lines. This legislation would protect their work by rolling back a harmful rule that would undermine and reduce the voice of MPOs who conduct the transportation planning best suited to their communities, especially in rural areas," said Sen. Capito.